



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 1, 1956

Honorable Allen Dulles
Director
Central Intelligence Agency

Dear Allen:

Enclosed find the Kissinger article and the Bromley
Smith memorandum. Also enclosed is a copy of my telegram to
Kissinger.

Sincerely,

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stassen".

Harold E. Stassen

Enclosures (3)

NSC review(s) completed.

Council on Foreign Relations

February 1, 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. ANDERSON

Mr. Elliott has circulated to the NSC Planning Board a paper called "Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Period" by Henry A. Kissinger, which is to appear "soon" in Foreign Affairs.

Whether by intent or as a result of carelessness, Mr. Kissinger presents President Eisenhower as a leader of the "no-alternative-to-peace" agitation, which he equates with peace at any price. On page 1 Mr. Kissinger says, "The President has argued that there is an increasing realization of the horrors of a nuclear holocaust, that there exists 'no alternative to peace.'" On page 27 he says, "It would, at a minimum, shift attention from the unrealistic and dangerous 'ban the bomb', and 'there is no alternative to peace' agitation to a field where constructive progress is possible."

Mr. Kissinger has misrepresented the President's position by misquoting him. In remarks made at Constitution Hall on October 19, 1954, the President said, "Since the advent of nuclear weapons, it seems clear that there is no longer any alternative to peace, if there is to be a happy and well world"(underlining added) It is clear from remarks which follow this quotation that the President was referring to the effects of a general war in which nuclear weapons were used. He went on to say in the paragraph following the quoted sentence that, "the soldier can no longer regain a peace that is usable to the world. I believe that the best he could do would be to retain some semblance of a tattered nation in a world that was very greatly in ashes and relics of destruction. But possibly he could keep us from immediate and complete domination by some outside force. That would be a poor climate in which to start again the development of a peace. Certainly it would be a far worse opportunity than we now have."

A few days later, in an address at Trinity College in Hartford, the President mentioned again in a more formal way his views on nuclear warfare. He said, "We have arrived at that point when war does not present the possibility of victory or defeat. War would present to us only the alternative in degrees of destruction. There could be no truly successful outcome."

On numerous occasions the President has made crystal clear that he does not believe in peace at any price. The latest expression of his view is contained in the January 6 State of the Union Message in which he said, "If Communist rulers understand that America's response to aggression will be swift and decisive - that never shall we buy peace at the expense of honor or faith - they will be powerfully deterred from launching a military venture engulfing their own peoples and many others in disaster." An even more precise statement on his position is contained in the remarks made at the lighting of the National Christmas Tree on December 17, 1954, when he said "[America] ... is for peace based upon decency and right. But let no man think that we want peace at any price; that we shall forsake principle in resigned tolerance of evident evil; or that we may pawn our honor for transitory concession."

Mr. Kissinger's statement of the President's position is so distorted and misleading that some attempt should be made to correct the manuscript prior to its publication. Presumably Mr. Elliott's attention should be called to the inaccuracy in the paper with a view to persuading Mr. Kissinger to correct it prior to publication.

If you feel it would be worthwhile, I will prepare an analysis of the thesis of the article, which has pretty big gaps in its logic, as well as some rather naive courses of action.

BROMLEY SMITH

Harold E. Stassen

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The White House - Special Assistant
to the President
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON OFFICIAL - 1160114

NIGHT LETTER

February 1, 1956

Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Dr. Elliott has circulated advance draft of your article "Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Period".

May I respectfully suggest that your quote of a single phrase from the President and your paraphrase of my statements give an erroneous impression of current United States policy. The President's phrase "no alternative to peace" is taken from the middle of a sentence which in its entirety reads as follows: "Since the advent of nuclear weapons, it seems clear there is no longer any alternative to peace, if there is to be a happy and well world." The President has many times made clear that this did not imply a policy of peace at any price. For example, on December 17, 1954, he said: "America is for peace based upon decency and right. But let no man think that we want peace at any price; that we shall forsake principle in resigned tolerance of evident evil; or that we may pawn our honor for transitory concession."

My position could more correctly be translated as meaning that the future potential of peaceful application of nuclear energy has provided a constructive alternative to some of the historic reasons for wars of aggression because each major power can now bring about a tremendous increase in its gross production without annexing either foreign territory or foreign labor. I have also made clear many times that this did not mean peace at any price and that we must be aware of continued great danger and serious peril. For example, in my address

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Dr. Henry A. Kissinger -- page 2.

to the National Industrial Conference Board Dinner at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on October 27, 1955, I said as follows: "Every country has figuratively open to it an undeveloped nuclear country equal in size to its present territory, which it can develop and enjoy without contending with a rival claimant. Under these circumstances, coveting or claiming the developed territory of another nation with the inevitable risk of mutual devastation is sheer folly. This is the fundamental fact of the atomic age which is slowly penetrating the minds of men everywhere."

CONFIDENTIAL
HAROLD E. STASSEN

Harold E. Stassen

EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
Office of Defense Mobilization
Washington 25, D. C.

January 27, 1956

MEMORANDUM FOR THE NSC PLANNING BOARD

FROM William Y Elliott
ODM Member

SUBJECT Force and Diplomacy in the Nuclear Period
by Henry A. Kissinger

The attached is a part of a study that Henry Kissinger has been doing for the Council on Foreign Relations. It supplements his articles in the Yale Review and in Foreign Affairs, dated April 1955. This article will itself soon appear in an issue of Foreign Affairs. I hope you will find it interesting.

Attachment

ODM-14824

by
Henry A. Kissinger

In his whimsical essay "Perpetual Peace" written in 1795 the German philosopher Kant predicted that world peace could be attained in one of two ways: by a moral consensus which he identified with a republican form of government, or by a cycle of wars of ever-increasing violence which would reduce the major powers to impotence.

There is no evidence that Kant's essay was taken seriously in his lifetime, or indeed for a century and a half afterwards. But much of the current discussion about the impact of new weapons has the apocalyptic quality of a premonition of Kant's second proposition. It is only natural, of course, that an age which has known two world wars and an uneasy armistice since should have as its central problem the attainment of peace. It is paradoxical, however, that so much hope should concentrate on man's most destructive capabilities. We are told that the growth of thermo-nuclear stockpiles has created a "nuclear stalemate" which makes war, if not too risky, at least unprofitable. The President has argued that there is an increasing realization of the horrors of a nuclear holocaust, that there exists "no alternative to peace." Mr. Stassen has maintained that the peaceful application of nuclear energy has made irrelevant most of the traditional reasons for fighting wars because each major power can now bring about a tremendous increase in its power output without annexing either foreign territory or foreign labor. And Walter Lippman has interpreted the Geneva "summit conference" as a non-aggression

longer a conceivable instrument of policy and that for this reason international disputes can be settled only by means of diplomacy.

These assertions have passed almost without challenge. They fit in well with a national psychology which considers peace as the "normal" pattern of relations among states and which has few doubts that reasonable men meeting in an atmosphere of good will can settle all differences by honest compromise. Too much depends, however, on the correctness of such propositions not to subject them to closer scrutiny. For the impact of the new weapons -- as every revolution -- has not only a technical but a conceptual side. Until power is used, it is, as Colonel Lincoln from West Point has wisely said, what people think it is. But except for the two explosions of obsolete type bombs over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, no nuclear weapons have ever been set off in wartime; there exists therefore no previous experience on which to draw. To a considerable extent the impact of the new weapons on strategy, on policy, indeed on survival, depends on our interpretation of their significance.

It, therefore, becomes of crucial importance that the U. S. not paralyze itself by developing a calculus of risks according to which all dangers would seem to be on our side. For if the Soviets interpret the meaning of new technological developments more flexibly they may gain a crucial advantage, not because their doctrine is correct, but because it is flexible; not because their action is wise, but because they possess a doctrine which permits them to act at all. Massive retaliation, our current military doctrine, is no longer a workable strategic concept; it

simplifies Soviet policy because it puts a premium on probing actions where the risks of total war seem out of proportion to the objectives to be obtained. And it limits our flexibility because the decision to resist is never taken in the abstract; it always reflects a calculus of risks and as the Soviet nuclear stockpile grows our reluctance to run the risks of a major war will increase. We shall continue to insist that we shall fight for our vital interests; but the borderline between what is considered vital and what is peripheral will shift with the growth of the Soviet nuclear stockpile. ¹

But perhaps the Soviets are facing the same problem? Perhaps an equilibrium can be attained, if not of mutual comprehension, then of mutual terror? There is some evidence for this in the reiterated Soviet statements of the horrors of a hydrogen war. But apart from the fact that these statements are usually addressed to foreigners and may, therefore, be designed to increase the inhibitions of others, it makes all the difference which side has to initiate thermonuclear war. As long as the Soviets possess a sufficiently flexible weapons system, they can confront us with a series of contingencies which shift the risk of initiating an all-out war on us; which force us to calculate peripheral objectives in terms of the destruction of New York or Washington or Chicago.

Thus, even if the Soviet are sincere in their professions of their fear of all-out war, the need for a reappraisal of our military doctrine does not diminish. For it is one of the most difficult tasks of statesmanship

¹For a fuller discussion see the author's "Military Policy and the Defense of the United States".

to reconcile the professions of another power with its potential. If the international order possessed the sanction of domestic arrangements, relations could be conducted largely on the basis of what states assert their intentions to be. But in an international order composed of sovereign states, the intentions of another power are subject to no compulsion, its potential is always capable of being used with hostile intent. This is the real meaning of "atomic blackmail." As the Soviet nuclear stockpile grows overt threats have become unnecessary; every calculation of risks will have to include the Soviet stockpile of atomic weapons and ballistic missiles.

The phrase "there is no alternative to peace" can therefore only lead to a paralysis of policy. It is tantamount to a renunciation of power and a staking of everything on the professions of another sovereign state. This would have been difficult at any period; it becomes an invitation to disaster when confronted with a revolutionary power which prides itself on its superior understanding of "objective" forces, and to which professions unrelated to a plausible possibility of employing force will seem either hypocrisy or stupidity. Force and diplomacy are not discrete realms; on the contrary, the ultimate pressure during negotiations have always been the possibility that recourse might be had to force. All the great international congresses occurred either at the end of wars which had established the relative strength of the contending powers or achieved their settlements on the basis of a grouping of states whose strength was so well understood

that recourse to force was unnecessary.² To be sure, the threat to use force was not always made explicit and many conferences were conducted in a spirit of good-will and harmony. But this only reflected the fact that the protagonists understood the limits set by the ultimate sanction of using force and conducted themselves accordingly.

If the slogan "there is no alternative to peace" becomes accepted doctrine, it will remove both a powerful brake on Soviet probing actions and any incentive for making concessions. And if we couple it with the statement that we do not accept the status quo we will only give impetus to Soviet peace offensives without generating a meaningful pressure on the Soviet sphere. The more terrible the weapons technology, the greater will be the reluctance to run the risk of any action that may involve its use. The strength of the British positions in the 19th century was a clear understanding of the nature of sea power and a strategic doctrine which permitted this understanding to be translated into reality. The difficulty with present military technology is that we are far from an agreement about its essential components and that the very power of modern weapons far from giving us freedom of action, seems to inhibit it. In short, our weapons technology and the objectives for employing them have become incommensurable. No more urgent task confronts the U. S. than to bring them into harmony,

² See the author's "The Congress of Vienna - A Reappraisal," World Politics, January, 1956,

II

But perhaps this incommensurability is inherent in the new weapons and not in the military doctrine? Perhaps we are moving into a new era of international relations in which the powers will have to adjust themselves to the fact that force can no longer be used? What of the "nuclear stalemate" so often invoked?

The first thing to notice is that the term "nuclear stalemate" covers many relationships, each with different consequences for policy. In one sense, for example, it refers to a condition in which one side possesses a defensive capability to absorb for all practical purposes the maximum air-offensive potential of the other. In this case, there would occur a stalemate in the air battle and the issue of the war would depend on alternative weapons systems. Such a stalemate, moreover, would make war more, rather than less, likely because neither side would need to calculate with widespread physical destruction. Another kind of stalemate would occur if both sides possessed a sufficient offensive capability to inflict catastrophic blows on the other. This is the situation most frequently thought of when the term "stalemate" is used. Such a stalemate, if it exists, would have a deterrent effect, but not to all forms of aggression. On the contrary, the deterrent effect works both ways: not only aggression, but the resistance to it becomes risky. What this type of stalemate deters is not war as such, but all-out war. The side which can present its challenges in less than all-out form would thereby gain a considerable advantage.

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Moreover, even if there does exist a stalemate, it does not make for stability in the present volatile state of technology, and much less for a consciousness of harmony. The specter of a technological breakthrough by the other side would always loom large; it would lend an apocalyptic quality to all current international relations. To be sure, not every technological breakthrough is of the same significance. A more elegant delivery system by itself will not prove decisive, provided either side can get a sufficient number of weapons on the target. A fundamental advance in the relation of offense to defense, on the other hand, may upset the military equation completely. Military superiority, therefore, depends not on the effectiveness of any one weapon, but on the relation of offense and defense to each other. The importance of this offense-defense "mix" can be illustrated by the following example: If one power places all its bets on strategic air power while the other side develops a very large defensive capability and only moderate offensive air power, it may happen that the defensive capability of the offensively weaker power will absorb the total offense of the other side, thus freeing the initially weaker SAC for a mortal blow.

Still the technical problems can be overdone. For the purpose of national policy the significance of the term "stalemate" resides not in the technical, but in the psychological aspect. For the "stalemate" is not anything new. In a very real sense there has been a nuclear stalemate since the explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It was, to be sure, not a physical stalemate; for close to a decade the U. S.

none the less in the sense that we never succeeded in translating our military advantage into an act of policy. This was due to many factors: a theory of war which knew no issue save total victory, humanitarian impulses, lack of clarity about the process in which we found ourselves involved. But whatever the reason, the U. S. atomic monopoly had at best a deterrent effect. It may have prevented a further expansion of the Soviet sphere; it did not enable us to achieve a strategic transformation in our favor. Even the deterrent effect is questionable: assuming that there had never been an atomic bomb, would we have surrendered Europe to the Soviets? Would the U.S.S.R. have risked a general war, so soon after having its territory devastated by the Germans and losing, on the most conservative estimates, 10 million dead? Not even a dictatorship can do everything simultaneously.

But apart from the questionable deterrence to an all-out war, the period of our atomic monopoly witnessed the consolidation of a satellite orbit in Eastern Europe, the triumph of Communism in China and most fundamentally, the growth of the Soviet atomic stockpile. Those who expect great things from technological breakthroughs would do well to study American actions after Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No foreseeable technological breakthrough is likely to be more fundamental than the discovery of the A-bomb. Yet its possession did not enable us to prevent another power which never hid its hostile intent to expand its orbit and to develop a capacity to inflict a mortal blow on the U. S.

What happened? Simply that we added the A-bomb to our military arsenal without integrating its implications into our thinking; that we saw in it a tool in a theory of warfare which had showed a poverty, indeed almost an absence of conception during the two world wars, but which became completely inapplicable after the explosions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki. For over a century before the outbreak of World War I, wars were an extension of policy. Because they were fought for determinate objectives there existed a rough commensurability between the force employed and the goal sought. But with the outbreak of World War I, war suddenly seemed to become an end in itself. After the first few months of the war, none of the protagonists would have been able to name an objective other than the total defeat of the enemy or at least they would have named objectives, such as the German demand for the annexation of Belgium, which amounted to unconditional surrender. This was all the more remarkable because none of the political leaders had prepared for anything but a war in the 19th century style, with rapid movements and quick decisions, so that the stalemate of the first winter was due primarily to the exhaustion of the munitions supplies. There had in fact occurred a hiatus between military and political planning which has never been bridged. The military staffs had developed plans for total victory, because these are the most determinate plans possible in which all factors are under the control of the military. But the political leadership proved incapable of giving this conception a concrete expression

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in terms of peace aims. The result was four years of war of ever-

increasing violence which carried its hatreds into a peace treaty that considered more the redressing of sacrifices than the stability of the international order and led within less than a generation to another world war fought in the same style.

The notion that war and peace, political and military goals were discrete entities had become so commonplace by the end of World War II that the most powerful nation in the world found itself paralyzed by the enormity of its own weapons technology. In every concrete instance, even in the matter of the regulation of the atom which affected our very survival we found ourselves stalemated by our own preconceptions: the consequences of our actions always seemed to outbalance the gains to be achieved. Thus our policy became entirely defensive: we possessed a doctrine of power to repel overt aggression, but we could not translate it into a positive goal. And even in the one instance where we resisted aggression we did not use the weapon around which our whole military planning had been built. The hiatus between military and national policy was complete; our power was incommensurable with the objectives of our national policy and our military doctrine could not find any intermediary application for our power. The growth of the Soviet atomic stockpile has merely brought the physical equation in line with the psychological one; it has increased the reluctance to engage in a general war even more. But it has not changed the fundamental question: how the political and military doctrines can be harmonized, how our power can give impetus to our policy rather than paralyze it.

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III

One way of avoiding the problem is to deny that it exists. It is possible to argue that the whole term "stalemate" is illusory, that in an all-out war one side is almost certain to be able to "win" in the sense of being able to impose its will on its antagonist. This is technically correct. But it does not affect the calculus by which the decision to enter the war is taken; in its crudest form whether it is "worth" fighting the war in the first place. Obviously no power will start a war it thinks it is going to lose. But it will also be reluctant to start a war during the course of which it thinks it will lose its national substance. It is doubtful whether France would have entered World War I had she known the losses she would suffer. The capacity to inflict greater losses on the enemy than one suffers, is the condition of policy; it cannot be its end.

The transformation imposed by the "nuclear stalemate" is not that victory in an all-out war has become technically impossible, but that it can no longer be imposed at an acceptable cost. Nor is this conclusion avoided by an appeal to military rationality. In Paul Nitze's hypothetical all-out war, for example, confined to air-fields and SAC installations, the bombing of cities would be unwise in the early stages of the war and unnecessary in the later ones after air-superiority has been achieved.⁴ But this assumes that victory is the only rational objective of a power in war. It overlooks that war is not only the instrument for imposing one's will on the defeated, but also a tool for defeating this intent by making it too costly. An air-battle would be a rational strategy for the side which

⁴ See Foreign Affairs, January 1956, pp. 187ff.
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has a strategic advantage either in terms of base structure or in weapons potential, for it would put the enemy at its mercy at a minimum cost. But for the side, which stands to lose the air-battle and which seeks to exact a maximum price for its defeat, the most rational strategy may well reside in the greatest destructiveness. It may at least attempt to equalize the threat of nuclear destruction by inflicting its actuality on the enemy and thereby deprive him of the fruits of his victory or at least make it too risky for him to seek total victory. Unconditional surrender -- or depriving the enemy of his nuclear capability which amounts to the same thing--cannot be achieved by subterfuge.

Others seek to avoid the horrors of nuclear war by outlawing nuclear weapons and returning to "conventional armaments." But apart from the fact that the distinction between nuclear and conventional weapons becomes increasingly nebulous as the range of low-yield weapons is increased, it will be impossible to reverse present trends. The whole planning and procurement of our defense establishment presupposes the use of nuclear weapons and procurement cycles cannot be altered every few years.

To be sure, the above argument is circular: it reasons from existing policy and policy can be reversed. But the author has become reluctantly convinced that the emphasis on nuclear weapons is correct, provided it can find a proper diversification and political expression. For the possession of nuclear weapons systems by both sides insures that any future war will be nuclear. At a minimum, forces will have to

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maneuver as if nuclear weapons might be used. This is true because the side which concentrates its forces might thereby give its opponent the precise incentive he needs to use nuclear weapons. But if forces are dispersed, they will not be able to hold a line or achieve a breakthrough with conventional weapons, because the destructive power of conventional weapons is so much smaller. Finally, nuclear weapons, particularly of the low-yield type, seem to offer the best opportunity to compensate for our inferiority in man-power and to use our superiority in technology to best advantage. Of course, we have to consider not only the damage we can inflict, but the losses we would suffer. On the balance, however, the advantage is probably on our side; an increase in fire-power has generally aided the defensive and we are much more likely to resist aggression than to initiate it; nuclear war raises special problems of control, of maneuver and of diversified capability which our system, industrial and political, should be better able to withstand than that of the Soviets.

It is not for nothing that Soviet propaganda has played on two related themes: that there is no such thing as a "limited" nuclear war and "ban the bomb." For both have the corollary "There is no alternative to peace," and both deprive our policy of flexibility and sap resistance to the preferred form of Soviet strategy: peripheral wars, internal subversion and atomic blackmail.

IV

We have, therefore, to return to an earlier question: whether the nuclear period permits a policy of limited wars? Before answering this question, it may be useful to analyze precisely what is meant by a limited war. Is a war limited because it involves less than the available military resources or is it limited because not all national resources are used for it? In the 17th century, for example, Louis XIV employed almost his whole army constantly for a period of close to twenty-five years. But his military establishment utilized only a relatively small proportion of the national resources. This was not due to any self-restraint on the part of the French king, but to the nature of his domestic structure which made it impossible for him to conscript his subjects or to levy income-taxes or to confiscate property. His military establishment was, therefore, limited by his available resources and with it the wars he fought. On the other hand, the wars of Prussia while they did not exceed in scope those of France, involved an incomparably greater mobilization of national resources. This was because Prussia's wealth was so much less that she could retain her position as a major power only by a domestic tour de force, by organizing the whole state for war. Still Prussia's exertions only gave her a precarious parity with stronger states; she did not force them to emulate her; the wars remained limited because the major powers were able to mobilize only a small proportion of their national resources for war and because the one power which was not so restricted did not thereby achieve a decisive advantage.

Since the French Revolution, the domestic restrictions on the capacity of governments to mobilize national resources have increasingly disappeared. To be sure, there still exist differences not in the power, but in the willingness to exact sacrifices: one of the sources of Soviet strength is her readiness to devote a much larger proportion of the national income to military expenditures than the U.S. But for our present purpose it is sufficient to point out that no major power will be forced to adopt a strategy of limited objectives because of insufficient resources. With modern weapons systems, a limited war will be an act of policy, not of necessity.

What then is a limited war under modern conditions? One can think of many models: a war confined to a geographic area, a war that does not utilize the whole weapons system, but limits its employment to specific targets. But none of these military definitions seem adequate: a war may be confined geographically or in terms of targets and yet drain the national substance, as happened in France in World War I. The fact that the whole weapons system is not employed, or that the destructive capability of the existing weapons system is small, is no more a guarantee against excessive suffering. A new world war fought with World War II weapons might in the long run prove as destructive as a short nuclear war. In the Thirty Year's War the number in each army was small by present-day standards, the power of the weapons was negligible measured against modern armaments and yet it is estimated that at least 30% of the population of Germany died during its course as a result of its length and its indetermination. In short, there exists no military way to

limit a war, expressed in Clausewitz's dictum that wars tend towards the maximum of violence and that the only rational military objective is the destruction of the enemy's will to resist.⁶ Wars can be limited only by political decisions, by defining objectives which do not threaten the survival of the enemy. In these terms, an all-out war is a war the objective of which is to render the enemy defenseless. A limited war is one for a determinate objective which by its very existence will establish a certain commensurability between the force employed and the goal to be attained. The prerequisite for a policy of limited war is the re-introduction of the political element into our concept of warfare; the surrender of the notion that policy ends when war begins, or that war has goals different from those of national policy.⁷

In the great periods of European Cabinet diplomacy between the Treaty of Westphalia and the French Revolution and between the Congress of Vienna and the outbreak of the first World War, wars were limited but not through an agreement on the battlefield. Rather there existed a political framework which led to a general consciousness of limited risks. This political framework was due to several factors: there was, to begin with, a conscious decision that the upheavals of the Thirty Year's War and of the Napoleonic wars should not occur again. This decision proved most effective in the period immediately following the wars, but it gave the international orders created by the Treaty of Westphalia and the Congress of Vienna the breathing spell necessary to

⁶ Clausewitz. Vom Kriege. Leipzig: B. Behr's Verlag, 1918. p. 3.

⁷ This too was recognized by Clausewitz. Although wars, he argued, tend towards a maximum of violence, they never reach it. The violence is always tempered by the political reactions of states, by their domestic structures and by their calculation of risk. Clausewitz, op. cit., p. 10ff.

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convince the major powers that none of the outstanding disputes involved their survival. More important was the fact that the international order did not contain a revolutionary power. No state was so dissatisfied with the peace settlement that it sought to gain its ends by overthrowing it and no power considered its domestic notion of justice as incompatible with that of the other components of the international order. Finally, in an era of stable weapons technology, both the strength of the powers and the assessment of it were relatively fixed, the risks of surprise attack and of unforeseen technological developments were relatively small. All this did not make conflicts impossible, but it limited them to disputes within a given framework; wars occurred, but they were fought in the name of the existing framework and the peace was legitimized as the better expression of an agreed consensus.

If we inquire which of these factors -- fear of war, legitimacy and a stable power relationship -- is present today, little cause for optimism remains. None of the major powers accept either the present framework of the international order or the domestic structure of the other states. On the contrary, we are confronted by a power which for over a generation has proclaimed the incompatibility of its domestic notion of justice with that of other states, and which has built an internal control system on the myth of a permanently hostile world. Every agreement with the Soviet bloc has proved temporary because it has been interpreted by the Soviet bloc as a tactical maneuver to prepare positions for the inevitable showdown. The slogan of "peaceful coexistence" cannot obscure the fact that we are living in a revolutionary period. For the

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justification of peaceful coexistence advanced by the Soviets is precisely their conviction that it will enable them to subvert the existing structure by means other than all-out war.

Nor is the nature of power relationships more reassuring. Even with a less volatile technology a two-power world would have an inherent element of instability because an increase in strength of one side cannot be made up by superior political dexterity, but is tantamount to an absolute weakening of the other side. Moreover, the weapons technology is far from stable. Almost up to the outbreak of World War II a weapons system would be good for a generation at least, while today it may be out-dated when it has barely passed the blue-print stage. Yet the failure to plan on the basis of these "prematurely aged" weapons might at any given point of time create a vital weakness. In the technological race, moreover, the side which has adopted the military doctrine that its opponent can always strike the first blow is at a distinct disadvantage, for it cannot afford a single mistake; it cannot afford to fall behind even for an instant. It must phase its planning and procurement over an indefinite period while its opponent, if he is determined on a show-down, can plan for a target date.

But if neither an agreed legitimacy nor a stable power relationship exist today, they may be outweighed by the third factor in the equation: the fear of thermo-nuclear war. Never before have the consequences of all-out war been so unambiguous; never the gains so incommensurable with the sacrifices. What statesman who declared war in 1914 would not have recoiled had he known the shape of the world in 1918?

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Today every weapons test augurs much worse horrors. There exists, therefore, a limiting condition to every diplomatic move. The distinction between tactical and strategic nuclear weapons may be nebulous in military terms, but every power has a powerful incentive to make some distinction, however tenuous its logic: the fear of thermo-nuclear extinction. This fear should be utilized to guarantee the "limits" of war and diplomacy.⁸

The problem of present-day strategy is, therefore, to devise alternative strategies and weapons systems to confront the other side with contingencies from which it can extricate itself only by thermo-nuclear war; but to deter it from this step by an adequate retaliatory capacity. All Soviet moves in the post-war period have had this character: they have faced us with problems which by themselves did not seem "worth" an all-out nuclear war,⁹ but with which we were unable to deal by an alternative strategy. We refused to defeat the Chinese in Korea because we were unwilling to risk an all-out conflict; we saw no solution to the Indo-Chinese crisis without increasing dangers we were reluctant to confront. A capability for the graduated employment of force may reverse or at least arrest this trend. Graduated deterrence is thus not an alternative to massive retaliation, but its complement: for it is the capability for "massive retaliation" which provides the sanction against expanding the war.

⁸ These considerations do not apply, of course, to a totally irrational decision to enter a war; Hitler presumably would have been indifferent to bringing the world down around him. But even if Hitler would not have accepted this reasoning, the certainty of nuclear destruction might have given the German military, on the verge of revolt, the incentive to refuse to carry out the order to enter the war. Similar considerations may apply to the Soviet military leadership.

⁹ See for example Mr. Finletter's letter to the Herald Tribune, Dec. 22, '55.

The U. S. strategic problem, then, can be summed up in these propositions:

a) All-out thermo-nuclear war should be avoided, except as a last resort.

b) No power possessing a thermo-nuclear capability will accept unconditional surrender without employing it and no nation is likely to risk thermo-nuclear destruction except to the extent that it believes its survival to be at stake.

c) It is, therefore, the task of our diplomacy to make clear that we do not aim for unconditional surrender; to create a framework in which the question of national survival is not involved in every issue. But equally we should leave no doubt about our determination to achieve intermediate objectives.

d) Since diplomacy which is not related to a plausible employment of force is sterile, it must be the task of our military policy to develop a doctrine and a capability for the graduated employment of force.

V

A doctrine for the graduated employment of force would enable us to escape the vicious circle in which we find ourselves and which can best be described as a flight into technology. We reply to every Soviet advance in the nuclear field by devising more fearful weapons, but in the process we reduce our willingness to employ them. A more flexible weapons system, which emphasized low-yield weapons, would extend the range of our alternatives by posing less absolute consequences. Such weapons system and the doctrine it implies can, however, only be the result of a political decision; the military cannot be asked to arrive at it on the basis of purely military considerations, for it presents them with peculiar difficulties. An all-out war is relatively simple to plan for, because its limits are set by military considerations and even by military capacity. The defining characteristic of limited wars, on the other hand, is precisely the imposition of ground rules which define its relationship to political objectives. Planning here becomes much more conjectural, much more subtle and much more indeterminate. The military, therefore, tend to resist it as outside their scope, unless the political leadership assumes the responsibility for defining the framework within which the military are to develop plans and capabilities.

In devising a doctrine for the graduated employment of force, we should have no illusions of the political objectives attainable by it. Graduated deterrence is not a cheap substitute for "massive retaliation"; it involves the recognition that with the passing of our atomic monopoly, the possibility of imposing unconditional surrender at an acceptable cost has disappeared. The graduated employment of force, therefore, presupposes

a capability which is really "graduated." If we build our whole strategy around "absolute" weapons, professions of limited objectives will be meaningless and any use of nuclear weapons is likely to touch off an all-out war. Our ability to fight a limited nuclear war depends, therefore, on our ability to extend the range of weapons in the low-yield field and to devise tactics for their utilization.¹⁰

The renunciation of unconditional surrender does not mean the acceptance of a military stalemate. The notion that there is no alternative between total victory or the status quo ante is much too mechanical. An enemy might accept intermediary transformations if his military position became untenable without resorting to all-out war. If SAC retains its retaliatory capacity, the other side may decide that amputation is preferable to suicide. In these terms, the calculus of risks by which a limited nuclear war is expanded into an all-out thermo-nuclear exchange is almost the same as that by which a limited conventional war is expanded into an all-out war. Whether we can achieve local transformations will, therefore, depend on three conditions:

- a) on the ability to generate pressures other than the threat of thermo-nuclear war;
- b) on the ability to create a climate of opinion in which national survival is not thought to be at stake;
- c) on the ability to keep control of public opinion should a disagreement arise over whether national survival is at stake.

¹⁰ One of the most important tasks of planning would seem to be the "war-gaming" of situations which involve the use of nuclear weapons by both sides and what would constitute victory in such a war. It is only fair to say that both the importance of low-yield weapons and changed tactics

The prerequisite for the graduated employment of force, then, is not only the capability for it, but its plausibility to the other side. Soviet reactions to American measures will depend not only on what we intend to do but what we are thought to intend to do. But is it possible to bring about a climate in which national survival is thought not to be at stake? Will the Soviets accept any withdrawal or will they not consider it a first step in an attempt to overthrow them? It must be admitted that there are reasonable grounds for pessimism. One cause of the revolutionary intransigence of the Soviets is, after all, their sense of insecurity, their conviction of a permanently hostile outside world. It is a conviction, moreover, which is produced not by U.S. policies, but by the existence of the U.S. as the strongest capitalist power. On the other hand, the problem is not simply one of reassuring the Soviets which is probably a well-nigh impossible effort, but of giving effect to the one interest we have presumably in common: that we both wish to avoid a thermo-nuclear war. Given this attitude, an all-out war is likely only in two contingencies: If the Soviets miscalculate their opportunity to achieve hegemony in Eurasia by peripheral actions which, in the absence of a capability for the graduated employment of force, may force us into an all-out war; or if the USSR should misunderstand our intentions and treat every US military move as if it were the prelude to an all-out war. It, therefore, becomes the task of our diplomacy to convey to the Soviet bloc that we are capable of courses other than all-out war, or inaction, and that we intend to use this capability. This will not inevitably prevent an all-out war: if the Soviets feel strong enough

to knock us out by a surprise attack, they will presumably do so. But it may prevent an all-out war based either on a miscalculation or on a misunderstanding of our intentions.

Moreover, while the Marxist philosophy has heretofore imparted great flexibility to Soviet policy, we may be able to use it as well to give effect to a policy of graduated deterrence. The belief in inevitable triumph is after all as consistent with tactical withdrawal as with an effort to fill every power vacuum. All of Soviet history testifies to the fact that this is not a regime for last stands if other alternatives present themselves. One need only study the abject efforts of the Politburo in the months before the German invasion to come to a settlement with Hitler to realize that if confronted with superior power the Soviets do not hesitate to apply Lenin's dictum: one step backward, two steps forward. And this tendency is supported by all of Russian history. Russia has always been less able to apply force subtly than massively; it has always been more vulnerable to wars outside its territories than within, and to limited rather than all-out war.

But what measures are available to our diplomacy to create a framework of limited objectives? Fortunately the imbalance in our national strategy has been caused less by our diplomacy than by our military policy. Indeed, our difficulty has been precisely the fact that our moderate pronouncements have seemed incongruous in the face of an all-or-nothing military policy and that our diplomacy has been deprived of flexibility because massive retaliation has had as its corollary the slogan "there is no alternative to peace." A modification of our military doctrine

would, therefore, go a long way towards creating a framework of limited objectives; the next step would be to convey this change to the outside world. In this task, it may be well to remember that every act of a major power has not only a substantive but a symbolic significance. Tests of high-yield weapons no doubt have their place, although there must be an upper limit of practical effectiveness, and their deterrent effect has to be weighed against their impact on the growth of neutralism abroad and eventually in this country. But in the present situation, low-yield weapons are much more likely to be translatable into political advantage. No one doubts our ability to fight an all-out war; what is at issue is our willingness to fight for anything save a direct attack on the U. S. and the meaningfulness of such a resistance should it take place.

But if it is one task of our diplomacy to present our intentions in a way to give us maximum flexibility, it is another to leave no doubt about the aspects of our military policy we cannot compromise. We cannot sacrifice basic national strategy to propaganda victories. Foreign policy is the art of utilizing the facts of life, not of denying their existence. And one of the fundamental facts of life is that any future war will be nuclear, that present trends should not be reversed. To speak of abolishing nuclear arms even as a long-range goal, even with a fool-proof inspection system is extremely hazardous. If we surrender our nuclear capability the Soviets will retain a conventional strength which would place all of Eurasia at their mercy; they would, therefore, be in a position to confront us with impossible alternatives by accepting our own proposals.

We should, for this reason, reject even the implications that nuclear weapons are in a special category from modern weapons in general. But while we cannot escape the facts imposed on us by modern technology we should express our willingness to mitigate their horrors. The political framework for the graduated employment of force is not created by "ban the bomb" agitation, but by proposals which seek to define the conditions of its use. It is, therefore, important that there occur a high-level pronouncement which would define as precisely as possible what is understood by the graduated employment of force, just as the doctrine of massive retaliation explained the rationals for all-out conflicts.

Such a declaration might then lead to proposals which would attempt to make these conditions bi-lateral. One fruitful field of activity might be conventions based on the established concept of "open cities". We could announce, for example, that we shall not bomb cities except in retaliation and provided that they are not used as military bases. Although a systematic effort to define the term "military base" is beyond the scope of this article, it is important to stress one point: that because of the luxury we enjoyed in World War II of being able to bomb the enemy without fear of retaliation, we may have come to define the term "military" much too widely. To be sure, almost every civilian activity bears on a war effort in some way, but no commander attacks every enemy position. On the contrary, he attacks where his losses will be fewest, where there exists the most favorable relationship between his risks and his gains. We cannot define "military base" in such a way that every production facility

is a target. Nor is this necessary. Up to World War II, the destructive potential of individual weapons was relatively so small that huge quantities were required to achieve a decision on the battlefield. Since these could only be supplied out of current production it made sense to seek to cut them off at the source. The destructiveness of modern weapons is such, however, that the stockpile at the outbreak of a war will probably suffice for its course and, in any case, it may be more decisively employed on the battlefield than against production centers.¹¹ The concept of "open city" should, therefore, exclude primarily air-bases, troop concentrations and weapons stockpiles.

Such a proposal would have substantial advantages even if not accepted by the Soviets. It would, at a minimum, shift attention from the unrealistic and dangerous "ban the bomb", and "there is no alternative to peace" agitation to a field where constructive progress is possible. It may force the Soviets to consider alternatives to all-out war which they may embody in counter-proposals. In the process, a clearer understanding of the opposing strategies may remove at least the danger that an all-out war breaks out because of a misunderstanding of the intentions of the other side.¹²

¹¹For an elaboration of these ideas see Richard C. Leghorn, "No Need to Bomb Cities to Win Wars." U.S. News and World Report, Jan. 26, 1955.

¹²Most of these ideas have been advanced in greater length and detail elsewhere. They are outlined here only to indicate the direction our diplomacy might take.

Many variations and alternatives of the above proposal are possible. They are intended to indicate a direction, not a program. However, both our diplomacy and our military policy will be sterile unless they are backed by an enlightened public opinion. (Theoretically the Soviets face the same problem, but their power and willingness to manipulate public opinion and to suppress it is much greater than ours). And public opinion in the U. S. is faced by two contradictory dangers: on the one hand, the residue from the period of our atomic monopoly which considers only what the damage we can inflict, not the losses we might suffer and which might therefore have little patience with intermediary solutions; on the other, the prospect that as the destructive potential of the new weapons comes to be increasingly realized there may grow up an American neutralism. Our leadership will have to steer between this Scylla and Charybdis, it must educate the people not only to our dangers, but also to our opportunities. It can take comfort from the fact that despite all the confusions and disappointments of the post-war period, the American people have at no time been unresponsive to firm presidential leadership

VI

The discussion up to this point has concerned primarily the impact of our diplomacy and of our military policy on the Soviet bloc. Its impact on our Allies and the uncommitted is no less important. There can be little doubt that our system of alliance is undergoing a crisis. Many reasons exist for this, the Soviet peace offensive, the domestic problems of France, the economic stagnation of Britain. But perhaps the most fundamental cause is the absence of a unifying military doctrine. The purpose of an alliance is two-fold: to confront the aggressor with superior force and to give each ally a greater degree of security than he could attain alone. But our current military doctrine coupled with the growth of the Soviet nuclear stockpile makes both of these conditions problematical in the eyes of our NATO partners. In an all-out thermo-nuclear war the ground strength of our NATO partners will be almost irrelevant; in terms of the doctrine of massive retaliation our Allies see little military significance in their own contribution. To be sure, their air-bases are important to our strategy, but this is no inducement to countries who want above all to avoid the ravages of an all-out war. We have for this reason to develop a military doctrine which makes not only sense to us, but also to our Allies; which guarantees not only our ultimate victory, but their own survival.

The situation is complicated by the growth of the Soviet atomic stockpile which confronts all of Western Europe with the imminence of nuclear destruction. This places an entirely different complexion on the decision to enter a war or on a policy of alliances which implies it.

Heretofore, a nation threatened with attack would generally resist, because the worst that could happen to it, as the result of an unsuccessful war, was the loss of its national substance. But not, where most of our NATO partners consider the outbreak of a war as leading to national disintegration, our system of alliances is in dire jeopardy. It can be restored, if at all, only by two measures:

- a) by a military doctrine and capability which makes clear that not every war is necessarily an all-out thermonuclear war, even in Europe;
- b) by measures such as the air-defense of NATO, which reduce the sense of impotence of our Allies should thermonuclear war break out.

The problem with respect to the uncommitted, particularly the newly independent powers is more complicated. Where our NATO partners suffer from a perhaps excessive awareness of the reality of power, the former colonial states seem hardly aware of its existence and nature. This is understandable. The leaders of the newly independent states achieved their positions by distinguishing themselves in the struggle with the former colonial power. But the independence movements almost without exception provided a poor preparation for an understanding of modern power relationships. Based on the dogmas of late 19th century liberalism and its pacifism, the independence movements depended for their cohesion more on ideological agreement than on an evaluation of power factors. Indeed, the claim to superior spirituality was and is the battlecry of, for example, Indian nationalism. Moreover, the bad conscience of the colonial power and their increasing weakness gave the struggle for independence more the character of a domestic debate than of a power dispute. To be

sure, many of the leaders of the newly independent powers spent years in jail and suffered heroically for their cause. It is not to deny the measure of their dedication to assert that the results achieved were out of proportion to their suffering. Empires which had held vast dominions for hundreds of years disappeared without a shot being fired and without making a serious effort to maintain themselves.

And if it is difficult for the leaders to retain a sense of proportion, it is next to impossible for the mass of the people. On the whole, they were involved in the struggle for independence only with their sympathies; to them the disappearance of the colonial powers must seem nothing short of miraculous. Moreover, most of the people of the newly independent states live in pre-industrial societies. It would be difficult enough for them to grasp the full impact of industrialism, it is too much to expect them to understand the meaning of nuclear technology. It is, therefore, understandable that in former colonial areas there is an over-estimation of what can be achieved by the power of words alone; a penchant for believing that every problem can be solved by a proclamation. Nor is this tendency diminished by the rewards that fall to the uncommitted in the struggle for allegiance of two big power centers. The temptation to defer the solution of difficult internal problems by entering the international arena, to solidify a complicated domestic position by triumphs in the field of foreign policy must be overwhelming.

But, however understandable, it is a dangerous trend. If this were a tranquil period, nothing would be involved but minor irritations. But in the present crisis, their dogmatism tends to make the newly independent

states susceptible to Soviet "peace offensives" and their lack of appreciation of power relationships may cause them to overestimate the protective power of moral precepts. Moreover, the only visible power in the newly independent states is that of Soviet or Chinese armies on their borders. The U. S., therefore, requires a 20th century concept for "showing the flag", which will permit us to make our power felt quickly and decisively, not only to deter Soviet aggression, but to impress the uncommitted with our capacity for action. This does not mean rattling the "atom bomb". On the contrary, our show of force should be restrained and be used to underscore our moderation. What it does require is greater mobility and a weapons system that poses less absolute sanctions than thermonuclear war.

To be sure, this is an ungrateful and indeed an unpopular course. But we will not be able to avoid unpopularity; in the short run, all we can hope for is respect. Moreover, condescending as it may seem, we have an important educational task to perform with respect to nuclear power in the newly independent countries. Within a generation and probably in less time than that, most of these states will possess nuclear power plants and, therefore, the wherewithal to manufacture nuclear weapons. And even if this should not prove the case, the Soviets may find it advantageous to increase international tensions by making available nuclear weapons, on the model of their arms deal with Egypt. But nuclear weapons in the hands of weak or irresponsible or merely ignorant governments present grave dangers. Unless the U. S. has demonstrated its ability to

prevent their use or has at least established internationally accepted ground-rules for their graduated employment, many areas of the world will begin to play the traditional role of the Balkans in European politics: the fuse which will set off a holocaust.

VII

Paul Nitze in his searching article in Foreign Affairs has distinguished action policy from declaratory policy -- the policy one has and the policy one announces. But there exists a level of policy even more fundamental -- the conception of alternatives which underlies any action, the standards of debate which may be all the more fundamental for never being made explicit. One of our difficulties in the nuclear period has been our tendency to treat its problems primarily as technical. But power is meaningless in the absence of a doctrine for employing it. It has always been true that the side which developed the more flexible doctrine thereby achieved a decided advantage, all other factors being equal: superior mobility and the use of artillery, a superior relationship between fire and movement furnished the basis of Napoleon's victories. The ability to understand the importance of railroads in concentrating forces was a reason for Prussia's victories in the 19th century. Similar examples would be the victories of the Roman legions over the Macedonian phalanx, of the English archers against the medieval knights (in part, of course, also a technological breakthrough). All these were victories not of superior resources, but of superior doctrine: the ability to break the framework which had come to be taken for granted and of making the victory all the more complete for facing the antagonist with contingencies which he had never even considered.

To be sure, military doctrine will not by itself be able to deal with the present period of revolutionary change. We need other measures: an imaginative diplomacy, an ability to identify ourselves with the aspirations of humanity. But we always seem in danger of focussing on the current Soviet threat and of neglecting the alternative strategies open to them. During the period of Soviet militancy, we were so pre-occupied with building defensive barriers that we neglected the psychological framework which could alone make them meaningful. And now, with the Soviet emphasis on more indirect methods of penetration, we stand in danger of forgetting that economic aid presupposes at least a modicum of security against foreign invasion.

The debate provoked by Mr. Dulles' statements in Life again~~ly~~ emphasized our dilemma: the enormity of modern weapons makes any thought of war seem repugnant, but the refusal to run the risk of war amounts to giving the Soviets a blank check. The dilemma has been defined as the alternative between Armageddon or defeat without war. We can overcome the paralysis induced by this prospect only by creating other alternatives both in our diplomacy, as well as in our military policy. But these measures require strong nerves. We can make the graduated employment of force stick only if we leave no doubt about our readiness to face a final show-down; its effectiveness will depend on our willingness to confront Armageddon.